

How do I get a...

Permit to Finish a Basement

To do the project safely and legally the following issues must be considered and addressed when finishing a basement in a dwelling:

1. A site plan is not required if the entire project is within the existing basement.
2. A zoning permit is not required for finishing existing basements.
3. A building permit is required for finishing a basement and applications are available at the building inspection counter in town hall or on the building inspection website.
4. The building permit application package must include scaled floor plan drawings for the entire basement and must show proper means of egress.
5. Lighting, switches, and receptacles must be shown on the plans.
6. Sleeping rooms are not permitted in basements. See the town zoning ordinance on the planning website.
7. Fossil-fuel-burning heating equipment that takes combustion air from the basement must have adequate air volume for the appliances or if located in confined space must get supplemental combustion air from outside that space. See 03 IRC Chapter 17.
8. The minimum ceiling height for finished basements in existing dwellings is six feet ten inches measured from the finished floor to the finished ceiling. Show the ceiling height on the plans.
9. Stairs and stairways must meet the building code requirements for headroom, guardrails, handrails, and lighting. See additional related information on the building inspection website.
10. Insulation and energy conservation details are required on the plans submitted with the building permit application. Show how the space will be heated and ventilated.
11. If a bathroom is proposed, details are required on the plans. Show scaled fixtures on the bathroom drawings. See 03 IRC Figure R307.2 for minimum fixture clearances. Show how drains will be vented. An exhaust fan is required.
12. There are strict limits on boring and notching joists and studs. See 03 IRC R502.8 and R602.6.
13. Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors must be installed throughout the existing house in accordance with 03 IRC R313. See related information on the building inspection webpage for the required locations.

The information contained in this document is of a general nature and not meant to take the place of the building or zoning codes, which are comprehensive and often detailed. Nothing herein should be construed as an interpretation of the applicability of codes and procedures to your specific project. If there are any questions about the application of the information herein, please contact the building inspection office.